

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 AID-20 PC-15

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R 231405 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1402

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

DIA DOD WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 2009/1

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: ARGENTINE ELECTION RESULTS: REPORT NO 14:

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

1. SUMMARY: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS REMAINS INCOMPLETE. THE VOTE RECOUNT CONTINUES, THE OFFICIAL RESULTS THEREFORE ARE NOT YET KNOWN, AND THERE IS STILL A DEGREE OF DOUBT AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THERE WILL BE A RUNOFF FOR THE PRESIDENCY. IN THE MAIN, HOWEVER, THE RESULTS ARE CLEAR. EVEN IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT A SECOND ROUND FOR THE PRESIDENCY SHOULD BE HELD, THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO DOUBT AS TO WHO WOULD WIN IT. HENCE, PRELIMINARY COMMENTS NEED NOT AWAIT THE FINAL BELL. THE OUTCOME OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE WAS NOT PARTICULARLY SURPRISING, THOUGH THE MARGIN OF CAMPORA' S VICTORY WAS SOMEWHAT LARGER THAN EXPECTED. MORE UNEXPECTED BY FAR WAS THE EXTENSIVE SWEEP IN THE CONGRESS, WHERE THE FRENTE WILL HAVE LARGE MAJORITIES IN BOTH HOUSES. MOST POLITICAL
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OBSERVERS ARE ATTRIBUTING THE FRENTE' S IMPRESSIVE SHOWING TO ONE OR A COMBINATION OF THREE FACTORS: (A) A PROTEST VOTE AGAINST

THE MILITARY, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE UNCOMMITTED INDEPENDENT VOTE;
 (B) A HEAVY YOUTH VOTE IN FAVOR OF THE FRENTE; AND (C) A
 BAND- WAGON EFFECT DURING THE LAST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN. WHATEVER
 THE CASE, THE FRENTE JUSTICIALISTA, AND MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE
 PERONISTS, WON A CLEAR MANDATE TO TRY TO GET ARGENTINA BACK ON
 THE ROAD TO PROSPERITY. PERHAPS THE MOST ENCOURAGING THINGS TO
 COME OUT OF THE ELECTIONS WERE THE DEGREE OF ACCORD WITH THE
 OTHER MAJOR PARTIES AS TO HOW TO GO ABOUT THAT TASK AND THE
 DEGREE OF CIVILITY WITH WHICH THE ELECTIONS THEMSELVES WERE CON-
 DUCTED. END SUMMARY.

2. AS SUGGESTED IN BA-1617, DURING THE LAST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN
 THE FRENTE IMPROVED ITS POSITION OVER THE " AROUND 40 PERCENT" THE
 EMBASSY HAD ORIGINALLY PREDICTED. IT APPEARS NOT TO HAVE WON A
 MAJORITY. THE FINAL PRELIMINARY COUNT INDICATED IT HAD RECEIVED
 SOME 49 PERCENT AND UNOFFICIAL AND STILL INCOMPLETE REPORTS ON
 THE RECOUNT THUS FAR SHOW ONLY A FEW DECIMAL POINTS OVER THAT
 FIGURE. THERE IS STILL SOME POSSIBILITY, HOWEVER, THAT THE FINAL
 RECOUNT WILL SHOW THE FRENTE TO HAVE EDGED OVER THE 50 PERCENT
 MARK. THE FRENTE'S HIGH VOTE TOTAL, TOGETHER WITH THE RELATIVELY
 POOR SHOWING OF THE RADICALES, WAS ENOUGH TO RENDER A SECOND
 ROUND HIGHLY UNLIKELY. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ELECTORAL LAW, THE
 UCR COULD DEMAND A SECOND ROUND IF THE FRENTE'S FINAL TOTAL TURNS
 OUT TO BE LESS THAN 50 PERCENT, AND THERE ARE SOME WITHIN THE PARTY
 WHO WISH TO DO SO (SEE BA-1848). THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE UCR
 WOULD HAVE ASKED FOR A RUNOFF HAD THE RESULTS BEEN ONLY SLIGHTLY
 DIFFERENT. ALTHOUGH PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS THE RADICALES WERE AS
 A RULE OF THUMB SAYING THEY COULD NOT BE MUCH MORE THAN 10 PERCENT
 BEHIND THE FRENTE ON THE FIRST ROUND IF THEY WERE TO HAVE A CHANCE
 OF WINNING THE SECOND (SEE BA-1487), SEVERAL RADICALES HAVE INDI-
 CATED TO US DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS THAT THE PARTY LEADERS DECIDED
 ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 11 TO RECOMMEND UCR PARTICIPATION IN A
 SECOND ROUND IF THE FRENTE GOT NO MORE THAN 45 PERCENT OF THE
 VOTE AND THE UCR GOT NO LESS THAN 25 PERCENT-- I. E. A MARGIN OF
 20 PERCENT. BUT, ACCORDING TO THE PRELIMINARY COUNT, THE FRENTE
 GOT 49 PERCENT AND THE UCR LESS THAN 22 PERCENT, LEAVING AN ALMOST
 INSUPERABLE MARGIN. NOT WANTING TO FACE THE POSSIBILITY OF AN
 EVEN MORE DISASTROUS DEFEAT IN THE SECOND ROUND, BALBIN CONCEDED
 AND THE UCR NATIONAL COMMITTEE DECIDED TO BACK HIS WISH TO ABSTAIN
 (THOUGH NOT TO GIVENWERL SUBSTANCE TO THAT ABSTENTION UNTIL THE
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OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RESULTS). IF THAT DECISION HOLDS, IT
 IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW THERE CAN BE A SECOND ROUND, EVEN THOUGH
 SOME IN THE FRENTE MIGHT ALSO WANT ONE. THERE CAN HARDLY BE A
 RUNOFF IF THE ONLY LOGICAL OPPONENT, THE UCR, REFUSES TO RUN.
 MANRIQUE, THE SECOND RUNNER UP, REPORTEDLY HAS SLIPPED A NOTCH TO
 14 PERCENT AND IN ANY CASE WOULD BE RULED OUT ACCORDING TO INTERIOR
 MINISTER AS A CHALLENGER, SINCE THE FREJULI AND THE UCR TOGETHER
 POLLED OVER 66 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, LIMITING THE RUNOFF TO THOSE
 TWO PARTIES. THE MINISTER'S INTERPRETATION, HOWEVER, IS NOT

NECESSARILY THAT OF THE ELECTORAL COURT.

3. WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A SECOND ROUND AT THE PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL (WHICH APPEARS UNLIKELY) , MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN THE FRENTE' S HIGH SCORE IN THAT RACE WAS ITS BROAD SWEEP IN THE CONGRESS. GIVEN THE UNLIKELIHOOD OF CAMPORA' S WINNING 50 PERCENT, AND TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THAT THE EXPECTED TENDENCY TO SPLIT VOTES WOULD RESULT IN FRENTE CANDIDATES BELOW THE PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL RECEIVING LESS THAN CAMPORA, MOST OBSERVERS HAD CONCLUDED THAT THE FRENTE WAS NOT LIKELY TO WIN A MAJORITY IN EITHER HOUSE-- THOUGH IT WAS EXPECTED TO WIN MORE SEATS IN BOTH THAN ANY OTHER PARTY. IN THE EVENT, THERE WAS SOME VOTE SPLITTING, EVEN IN BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE WHERE THE PERONISTS WON BY A LANDSLIDE. THERE WAS NOT NEARLY ENOUGH, HOWEVER, TO MAINTAIN INTACT THE OLD VOTING PATTERNS. INSTEAD, IN THE KEY PROVINCES THE COAT- TAIL EFFECT OF THE CAMPORA- SOLANO LIMA SLATE WAS STRONGER THAN EXPECTED. THE FRENTE WON AT LEAST EIGHT GOVERNORSHIPS AND 16 SENATORIAL SEATS ON THE FIRST ROUND, AND AFTER THE FINAL COUNT IS LIKELY TO END UP WITH AT LEAST 16 OF 22 GOVERNORSHIPS, 39 OF 69 SENATORIAL SEATS AND 143 OF 243 SEATS IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. THE CLOSEST OPPOSITION PARTY, THE UCR, WILL BE LUCKY TO END UP WITH TWO OR THREE GOVERNORSHIPS, TEN TO TWELVE SENATORIAL SLOTS AND 55 TO 58 SEATS IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES.

4. THE FRENTE, THEN, HAS WON AN IMPRESSIVE MANDATE. NOR WAS IT WON EXCLUSIVELY ON THE BASIS OF WORKING CLASS AND YOUTH VOTES. EVEN IN THE EXCLUSIVE PALERMEZYS EVK# BARRIO NORTE AREAS OF

BUENOS AIRES, THERE WERE SOME POLLING ZONES THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME WENT DECISIVELY TO THE PERONISTS. EVEN MORE SURPRISING, THERE WERE AREAS IN THE SOUTH POPULATED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY BY NAVY FAMILIES THAT WENT HEAVILY FOR THE FRENTE. INDEED, THE
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FRENTE' S MANDATE IS ALMOST INCONVENIENTLY COMPLETE. WITH THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE AT THEIR DISPOSAL, CONTROL OF MOST OF THE PROVINCES AND LARGE MAJORITIES IN THE SENATE AND CHAMBER, THEY WILL FIND THEMSELVES ALONE ON THE GRIDDLE IF THINGS GO WRONG. FOR EXAMPLE, THEY WILL HARDLY BE IN A POSITION TO COMPLAIN THAT THEIR LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE HAS BEEN BLOCKED BY A RECALCITRANT OPPOSITION IN CONGRESS. IT MAY WELL BE THAT PERONIST EXPRESSIONS OF DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE ABSENCE OF A " HEALTHY OPPOSITION" (SEE BA-1838) ARE PROMPTED MORE BY THE REALIZATION THAT THIS LEAVES THEM IN A RATHER EXPOSED POSITION THAN BY A CONCERN FOR THE NEEDS OF A FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY. THIS SAME REALIZATION MAY INCREASE THEIR WILLINGNESS TO OFFER THE UCR, AND POSSIBLY OTHER PARTIES, POSITIONS IN THE GOVT, IN THE HOPE OF DIFFUSING SOMEWHAT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADMINISTRATION.

NOTE BY OC/ T: # AS RECEIVED. WILL BE SERVICED ON REQUEST.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 2009/2

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: ARGENTINE ELECTION RESULTS: REPORT NO 14:
PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

5. MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS HERE ARE ATTRIBUTING THE MASSIVE FRENTE VOTE TO ONE OR A COMBINATION OF THREE FACTORS. PROBABLY OF GREAT-EST IMPORTANCE WAS THE EFFECTIVENESS WITH WHICH THE FRENTE' S CAMPAIGN TACTICS EXPLOITED POPULAR DISCONTENT WITH MILITARY RULE. PERON' S DIGS AT THE " RULING CAMARILLA" AND THE SLOGAN " LANUSSE OR PERON" REPRESENTED CALCULATED RISKS THAT PAID OFF HANDSOMELY. MOST KEY UCR LEADERS WITH WHOM THE EMBASSY HAS SPOKEN ARE CONVINCED THAT AT LEAST A MILLION OF THE FRENTE' S VOTES WERE DIRECTED MORE AGAINST THE MILITARY THEN THEY WERE, IN A POSITIVE SENSE, FOR THE FRENTE. THIS MAY BE AN EXAGGERATION BUT ONLY WITH RESPECT TO DEGREE. THE PHENOMENON ITSELF IS UNQUESTIONABLE. INDEED, SEVERAL OBSERVERS, INCLUDING DISGUSTED RADICALES, HAVE EXPRESSED THE CONVICTION THAT
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A GREAT MANY PEOPLE FINALLY MADE UP THEIR MINDS AFTER LANUSSE' S

FRIDAY NIGHT SPEECH (REPEATED ON SATURDAY NIGHT) CLUMSILY URGING THEM NOT TO VOTE FOR THE FRENTE. IN REACTION, THEY DID PRECISELY WHAT HE URGED THEM NOT TO DO.

6. ANOTHER MAJOR FACTOR WAS THE YOUTH VOTE. THERE WERE OVER THREE MILLION CITIZENS BETWEEN 18 AND 25 WHO HAD NEVER CAST BALLOTS BEFORE-- AND FOR WHOM, THEREFORE, THERE WERE NO PREVIOUS VOTING PATTERNS. AS SUGGESTED IN BA-862, THE FRENTE WAS LIKELY TO GET CONSIDERABLY MORE THAN THE 41 PERCENT ITS COMPONENT PARTS HAD SCORED IN THE 1965 ELECTIONS IF ITS EFFECTIVE APPEAL TO YOUTH PAID OFF IN VOTES FROM THAT SECTOR. CLEARLY THE YOUTH VOTE DID GO HEAVILY FOR THE FRENTE. FRENTE RALLIES INVARIBLY ATTRACTED A VERY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND AMERICAN EXCHANGE STUDENTS REPORTED THEIR DORMITORIES TO BE OVERWHELMINGLY PERONISTA. MORE COGENTLY, PUBLIC MEDIA POLLS AND TELEVISION INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED OUTSIDE THE VOTING BOOTHS (THOUGH HARDLY INFALLIBLE) INDICATED THAT A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF THE NEW VOTERS HAD CAST OR INTENDED TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR THE FRENTE. THIS WAS GALLING TO RADICALES, WHO, REMEMBERING THE ACTIVE ROLE OF THE YOUTH IN THE OVERTHROW OF PERON IN 1955, FELT YOUTH LOGICALLY SHOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE BEEN REPELLED BY PERON' S FASCIST BACKGROUND AND BY HIS CONTINUED WILLINGNESS TO CONSORT WITH THE LIKES OF STROSSNER AND TO SEEK ASYLUM IN FRANCO SPAIN. PERON, HOWEVER, IS A FIGURE WHO DEFIES CATEGORIZATION (AS SUGGESTED BY THE FACT THAT AT ONE AND THE SAME TIME THE NEO-FASCISTS IN ITALY AND ALLENDE' S MARXIST FOLLOWERS IN CHILE HAVE HAILED HIS NEW VICTORY). WHATEVER ELSE MAY BE SAID OF HIM, MOREOVER, PERON IS, AND HIS PRIMARY APPEAL TO YOUTH RESIDES IN THE FACT THAT HE IS, FIRST AND FOREMOST A NATIONALIST AND PERHAPS A SYMBOL OF A PERIOD WHEN ARGENTINA HAD GREATER WEIGHT IN WORLD AFFAIRS. FRUSTRATED YOUNG PEOPLE SEE LITTLE TO RESPECT IN ARGENTINA' S RECENT PAST, AND AS THEY CAST ABOUT FOR SOMETHING OR SOMEONE TO BELIEVE IN, PERON' S IS THE ONLY MAJOR FIGURE THAT STANDS OUT ON THE HORIZON. THEY LOOK TO HIM TO RESUCITATE THE DREAMS OF LA GRAN ARGENTINA. AS THE WEEKLY MAGAZINE CONFIRMADO PUT IT RECENTLY, NO MATTER HOW PROGRESSIVE AND NATIONALISTIC THE UCR' S PROGRAM MIGHT HAVE BEEN, THE UCR STILL COMES ACROSS AS A 19 TH CENTURY BOURGEOIS PARTY. PERON, ON THE OTHER HAND, CAN STRIKE DEALS WITH FOREIGN OIL COMPANIES AND SOMEHOW NEVER LOSE HIS NATIONALIST IMAGE.

7. THIRDLY, A BAND- WAGON EFFECT SEEMS CLEARLY TO HAVE HAD AN IMPACT DURING THE LAST FEW DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN. REPORTEDLY, POLLING
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SERVICES WHICH WERE STILL SHOWING 15 TO 20 PERCENT UNDECIDED TWO WEEKS BEFORE ELECTION DAY HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY FOUND THAT A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF THOSE MAKING UP THEIR MINDS DURING THE LAST WEEK DECIDED IN FAVOR OF THE FRENTE JUSTICIALISTA BECAUSE OF ITS WINNER IMAGE , AN IMAGE WHICH WAS FURTHER ENHANCED BY THE FRENTE' S HUGE RALLY ON THURSDAY NIGHT BEFORE ELECTIONS. THIS STILL DOES NOT EXPLAIN SATISFACTORILY HOW SOME OF THE SUPPOSEDLY RELIABLE INDEPENDENT POLLS WERE GIVING THE FRENTE ONLY 31 PERCENT SHORTLY BEFORE

THE ELECTIONS.

8. FOR THESE AND OTHER REASONS, THE FRENTE WON AND THE PERONISTS, AFTER EIGHTEEN YEARS, WILL BE BACK IN POWER. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, SOMETHING NEW ABOUT THE ELECTIONS OF 1973. THEY WERE CONDUCTED ON A RATHER HIGH PLANE, WITH LITTLE IN THE WAY OF VITUPERATION BETWEEN THE PARTIES (THOUGH PLENTY OF IT FOR THE MILITARY GOVT). MORE IMPORTANTLY, THERE WAS A DEGREE OF COOPERATION AND COMMON GROUND BETWEEN MOST OF THE PARTIES (AND ESPECIALLY BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR ONES) THAT HAS NOT EXISTED IN RECENT ARGENTINE HISTORY. HOW DURABLE AND EFFECTIVE THE ELECTORAL SOLUTION PROVES TO BE MAY WELL DEPEND UPON WHETHER OR NOT THIS SENSE OF COMMON PURPOSE CAN BE MAINTAINED IN THE POSTELECTION PERIOD. IT WILL ALSO DEPEND ON THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE SPIRIT OF REVANCHISMO IS KEPT UNDER CONTROL. SHOULD EXTREMISTS RESORT TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE IN THE NAME OF THE GOVT, AND SHOULD LARGE- SCALE EXPROPRIATIONS OCCUR, THE MILITARY MIGHT WELL MOVE TO TAKE OVER.

9. FINALLY, IT SHOULD BE REMARKED THAT THE ELECTION RESULTS REPRESENT A VICTORY FOR THE CENTER OF THE ARGENTINE POLITICAL SPECTRUM RATHER THAN FOR THOSE TO THE LEFT OR RIGHT. NOT ONLY THE FRENTE JUSTICIALISTA BUT ALSO THE UCR AND THE MANRIQUISTAS ARE ESSENTIALLY CENTRISTS. AMONG THEM, THEY GARNERED SOMETHING LIKE 85 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. THE LEFT (REPRESENTED BY SUCH PARTIES AS FIB AND THE PST) GOT ONLY A LITTLE OVER ONE PERCENT. THE RIGHT (ESSENTIALLY REPRESENTED BY NUEVA FUERZA) PULLED IN ONLY ABOUT TWO PERCENT. RATHER THAN IDEOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES, THE PERONIST VICTORY IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE EMOTIONAL IMPERATIVE OF FRUSTRATED NATIONALISM- AND, AS THE PERONISTS THEMSELVES SAY, " NOT SO MUCH TO THE FACT THAT WE WERE OR ARE SO GOOD AS TO THE FACT THAT EVERYTHING AFTER US HAS BEEN SO BAD."

10. SO FAR OUR NON- INVOLVEMENT IN THE CAMPAIGN HAS SERVED TO DAMPEN ANTI- AMERICAN NATIONALISM. CRIES OF " YANKEE IMPERIALISM" CONFIDENTIAL

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